



Faculty of Engineering
and Applied Science

A GUIDE TO AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. However, it is not always clear what constitutes plagiarism. As a result, students sometimes unknowingly plagiarize when writing reports.

This document explains the different types of plagiarism and discusses methods that can be used to avoid accusations of plagiarism in the future.

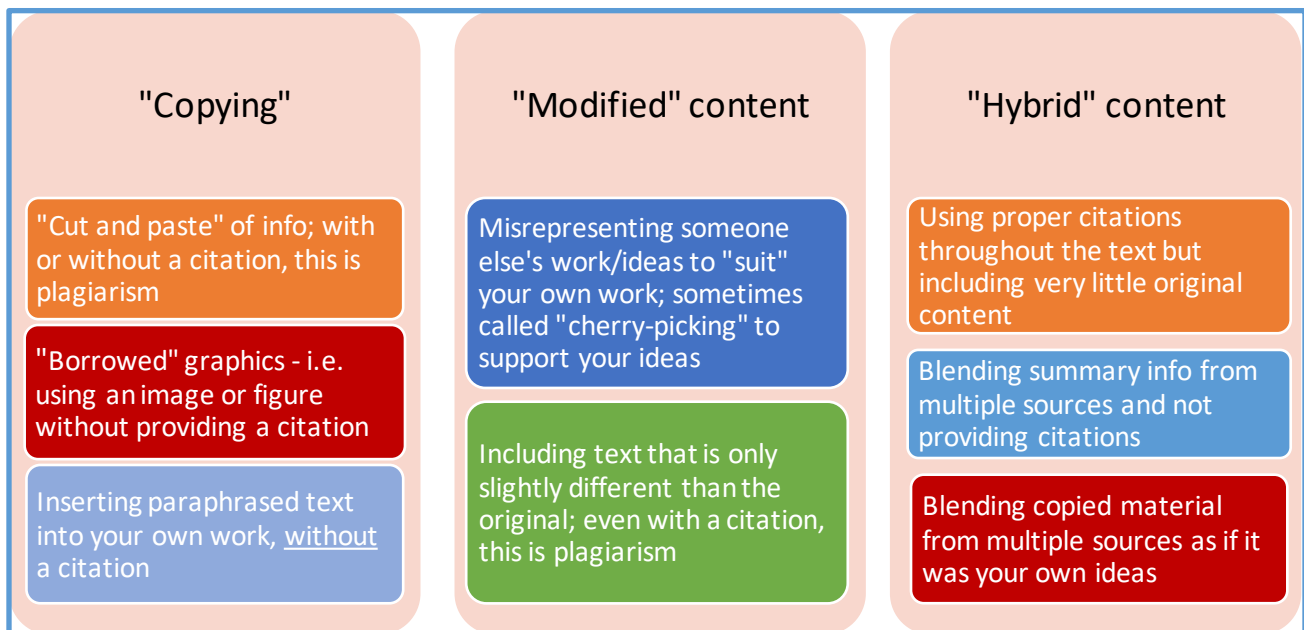


Figure 1: Some examples of plagiarism

Some forms of plagiarism, such as cutting and pasting information a web page into a paper or "buying" an essay online, are obvious. However, there are other forms of plagiarism that you may not even be aware of. For example, when you incorporate another author's information into your work without making it sufficiently different from the original, this is also plagiarism – even if you provide the citation. Copying information from multiple sources and giving proper citation, even if properly cited, can be considered plagiarism if there is little original content. All of the examples in Figure 1 would be considered academic misconduct.

When trying to incorporate another author's ideas into your work, you need to decide whether to quote, paraphrase, or summarize what you have just read. By using the information found in Table 1, you should be able to determine the best way to incorporate these ideas in your text. **Whether you decide to quote, paraphrase or summarize the text, an in-text citation is *always* required.**

Table 1: Guide to determining when to quote, paraphrase, or summarize another author's ideas

Ways to Use Information from Another Source		
Directly quote	Paraphrase	Summarize
<p>Used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sparingly only when the exact wording of the information needs to be retained "as-is" in order to keep the original meaning to incorporate famous quotes, exact instructions, popular definitions, or legislation 	<p>Used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> frequently when you want to include <u>specific details</u> of a text to support your ideas when you can re-write the text in your own words without changing the meaning 	<p>Used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> frequently when details are not as important as the overall message when you want to include the overall message or findings of a text.

Note about quotations: Quotations cannot be sentences by themselves. They must be introduced with some of your own writing, even if that is a simple phrase like *according to*. Quotation marks go around the unaltered words from the original source. In most cases, direct quotes require page numbers in their citations.

Note about paraphrases and summaries: These must retain the same meaning as the original, but the wording must be adequately altered. Just using a few synonyms will not give a sentence enough originality to be considered an original sentence. Changes must be made to both the words and the sentence structure. Paraphrases and summaries both require citations.

EXAMPLE

Original: To state that [a spectroscope] tells what kind of materials there are in the sun and stars, millions of miles away, seems like an unwarranted attack upon one's imagination, and yet this is one of the things that the spectroscope does.
—Edward W. Byrn, 1900

Quotation: In 1900, Edward Byrn described the spectroscope as a device that can identify "what kind of materials there are in the sun and stars, millions of miles away" [1, p. 229].

Poor Paraphrase: To say that a spectroscope says what type of substances there are in the stars and the sun, millions of kilometers away, appears to offend a person's daydreams, but this is a function of a spectroscope.

Notes: This paraphrase is insufficient because it only replaces words with synonyms. The structure of the sentence is virtually identical. In one instance, the word "daydreams" is used to replace "imagination," but this does not match the context of the sentence. No citation is included, which automatically makes it plagiarism.

Good Paraphrase: One of the functions of a spectroscope is to identify the substances that make up distant objects, such as stars [1].

Notes: This paraphrase works because the sentence structure changes along with the actual words used. A citation is included. The idea of being unbelievable has been removed because the intent was only to describe a function of a spectroscope. Paraphrases may not change the intended meaning of the source, but they do not have to include every idea or example from the original.